Travelogue: Menorca, April 2024

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I was looking for a suitable holiday for both riders and non-riders and found just the thing in our extensive programme: Menorca in comfort on the Cami de Cavalls on horseback, in the short version of 3 days' riding.

The beautiful hotel is situated 1.5 km from the beach. It offers 4-star comfort and is a former finca that has been converted, true to the motto 'small but perfect'. A total of 27 rooms with a pool are available. The spacious garden is very well maintained and lies between the individual buildings of the old finca, which now house guest rooms. We were very impressed by the personal and attentive service, as well as the excellent cuisine.

We travelled from the airport by hire car, as we wanted to explore the island independently and organise our time flexibly, in addition to the three days of riding. The roads on this small sister island of Mallorca are well signposted and in excellent condition. This meant that before the trail rides and afterwards until our departure, we were able to visit many beautiful vantage points, such as the lighthouses above the cliffs in the north, as well as lovely towns like Ciutadella or Cala Fonells. Menorca boasts several prehistoric Talayotic settlements that are well worth a visit. They are scattered across the island and well signposted.

The Cami de Cavalls is a coastal circular route on Menorca that is ideal for hiking on foot or, even better, on horseback. We rode these trails on horseback, mainly in the south. This allows you to visit beaches in the small coves that cannot be reached by car. The coves are framed by sandstone cliffs and lush greenery, which was particularly abundant here in April. What makes Menorca special is the colour of the sea. The water is very clear and there are sandy beaches, though some are quite stony. It's almost a Caribbean turquoise that defines the sea here.

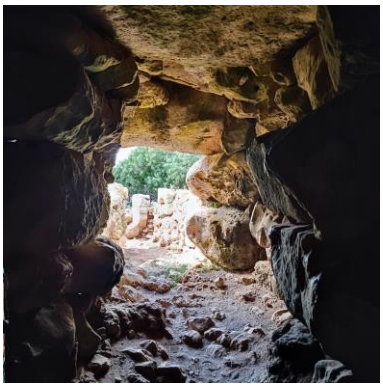
Compared to its larger sister islands, Mallorca and Ibiza, the island feels more authentic, tidier and cleaner. It is less overrun or overdeveloped by tourism. This speaks volumes for the Menorcans, who have chosen to resist architectural eyesores and mass tourism.

Menorca is also an island of horses. The Menorcan horse stands between 1.60 and 1.80 metres tall. In breeding, emphasis is placed on black horses without markings. They have beautiful, easy-to-ride gaits, are deliberate, calm and sure-footed over country. However, the breeding programme is primarily aimed at producing a show horse. There are many fiestas in Menorca where the Menorquin horses are ridden through the crowds, demonstrating their elegance to the celebrating public. Particularly impressive is the 'steigern' – the raising of the forequarters, causing the horse to rear and stand on its hindquarters, also known as a 'bot'. We spent some wonderful days with this special breed of horse and in the stunning surroundings. My non-riding companion was included in the meals and meeting points during the day's rides.
Either we walked to the lunch meeting point, or the logistics for the lunch break allowed for a transfer to rejoin the riding group.

On the first day of the riding programme, our group met for dinner at the hotel. A table had been reserved for us and we had the chance to get to know one another. In total, there were six of us riders and one non-rider. We communicated in English, as five of the group were French and we were German. But we had fun right from the start and it was a convivial gathering. Together we looked forward to the next day, when we would finally get to the horses. It began with a hearty breakfast on the hotel terrace in lovely weather. Sarah then came to collect us. She was our riding guide for the next few days and looked after us very attentively. Born in Britain, she has lived in her adopted home of Menorca for many years and accompanies the Sternritte with information about this beautiful island.

We drove by car towards the beach to the San Adeodato stud farm, which is attached to the hotel. There we met Marti, our second guide, who had already saddled and prepared all the horses for our first ride. But first, we were given an insight into the stud farm's breeding programme and a brief demonstration of Menorcan horsemanship by Marti, who had saddled the stud farm's star stallion. He rode the Spanish walk and the Bot for us. It was very impressive to see the elegance with which these horses move, and you could tell from the stallion's demeanour that he was enjoying it himself.

Then it was time to mount up and set off. Our first destination was not far from the stud farm. We visited the prehistoric Talaiotic village of Sant Agusti, which dates back to between 1200 and 1000 BC.



The ride continued along the Cami de Cavalls to Santo Tomas beach. At this time of year, there were few tourists about and we enjoyed riding our horses into the surf. At lunchtime, we stopped at the beach restaurant and enjoyed a hearty meal of tapas. My non-riding travel companion joined us there after he had walked his way to the restaurant.

In the afternoon, we rode into the hinterland, crossing several gorges and following stony footpaths along the Cami de Cavalls. The talented Menorcan horses coped well with the terrain, which was at times steep and, above all, stony. With sure-footed confidence, they led us to our next destination: Sa Cova d'es Coloms, also known as the Cathedral. This cave is very large and extends deep into the rock.

Towards evening, we reached a meadow near our hotel. After this long day's ride, we were able to let our four-legged friends roam in the lush greenery. And our group once again enjoyed the excellent cuisine of our hotel in a convivial atmosphere.

The next day's ride was the longest in terms of riding time. It took us 7 hours over rough and smooth terrain, steep slopes and gorges along the Cami de Cavalls by the coast. Along the way, we came across beautiful beaches that cannot be reached by car. For lunch, we met up with our non-rider and the service team at a beautifully laid table in the woods. We enjoyed a delicious meal before continuing through the hinterland back to the meadow by our hotel, where the horses enjoyed their well-deserved rest.

Rain was forecast for the following day. We decided to go riding anyway and enjoyed a two-hour ride despite the rain. On Son Bou beach, we rode up the cliffs and, despite the rainy weather, had a wonderful view of the coastal region.

Due to the weather, we took the horses back to the San Adeodato stud farm before lunch, which we had again at the beach restaurant. My travelling companion used the rainy morning to visit the museum in Mahón.

Riding lessons in the Menorcan style were actually planned for the afternoon. But due to the rain, this wasn't possible in the riding arena. As we were all staying at the hotel a little longer, we postponed it until the next day. The organisation and coordination by the hotel were excellent. They tried to offer us the full range of the booked riding programme despite the weather restrictions.

For the lessons in the Menorcan riding style, we visited a stable near Ciutadella. A minibus had been chartered for the seven of us, and we were all able to learn the bot and the Spanish walk on the Menorcan horses. Even my travel companion, who had no riding experience, was impressed by this art of riding.

What I particularly liked about this programme was the mix of culture, beautiful scenery, excellent food and comfortable accommodation. But above all, the horse breed and the style of riding, which had been completely new to me until then. Also, the fact that we were able to enjoy a fantastic holiday together as riders and non-riders, experiencing it all together yet with everyone getting their own way.

Menorca has left a lasting impression on me and I will definitely visit this island and its horses again!

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